

Witton Middle School

Old Coach Road, Droitwich Spa WR9 8BD

Inspection dates	14–15 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior and other leaders, ably led by the steely determination of the headteacher, have ensured that the school is improving rapidly. They have tackled previously identified weaknesses in teaching with rigour and urgency.
- Outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have improved strongly over the last three years.
- As a result of good teaching, most pupils currently are making consistently strong progress, especially in mathematics. By the time they leave at the end of Year 7, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making at least as much progress as other pupils in the school and nationally. Leaders and teachers set the same high expectations for these pupils as for others.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well around the school. They are highly articulate and show a high degree of respect for others. The large majority have very positive attitudes towards learning.
- The school's values of perseverance, responsibility, independence, determination and empathy are promoted very well and thread through every aspect of school life.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are very thorough. The school does all it can to ensure that pupils are kept safe in school.
- The effectiveness of governance has rapidly improved. Governors know the school very well and are prepared to challenge leaders. They share the headteacher's vision and ambition for the future direction of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The extent to which teachers provide activities for pupils that engage their interest and challenge them is not yet consistent enough.
- The progress of pupils currently in Year 6 in writing is not as strong as it is in other year groups.
- In a small minority of lessons in Year 6, pupils' attitudes to learning are not of the same high standard as they are in most classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that pupils' progress in Year 6 in writing is as consistently high as it is in other year groups by increasing the opportunities pupils have to practise more advanced skills.
- Teachers should ensure that they consistently:
 - provide challenging and inspiring activities so that pupils maintain their focus on learning, and respond quickly if pupils start to lose this focus
 - check that the targets they have set for pupils are specific enough and that pupils have an early opportunity to achieve them
 - inform pupils clearly how they can improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Senior leaders are a highly effective, united team who share a common vision to raise standards across the school in an environment that promotes the school's core values.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has tackled previously identified weaknesses in teaching through support and training and, where necessary, through moving staff on. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff over the last few years.
- Senior leaders have made improving outcomes in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, a high priority and have successfully addressed this issue.
- Senior and middle leadership has been extended and the school's capacity to improve has been strengthened through a programme of staff training and performance management. Leaders at all levels check the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account through lessons observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of pupils' progress information.
- Teachers report that the quality of the feedback they receive from leaders is very good and helps to improve their teaching further. Where required, additional support for teachers has led to improvements. Heads of year groups have enhanced their roles, observing teaching and conducting pupil progress meetings with individual teachers.
- Information on the progress of individuals and pupil groups is analysed in detail to identify any areas where pupils may be falling behind, in order to secure improvements. The impact of a phonics programme in key stage 2 is tracked closely to ensure that pupils are making good enough progress.
- Leaders set high expectations, underpinned by the school's values. All pupils, regardless of their background or pupil group, are expected to make similar rates of progress. Consequently, gaps are rapidly narrowing for disadvantaged pupils compared with other pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium, is used highly effectively and evaluated thoroughly to consider how its use can be improved further. Leaders are quick to make changes where necessary, for example deploying support in classes rather than out of class so that disadvantaged and other targeted pupils can access high-quality teaching alongside their peers.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and are quick to identify any areas for development. The most able pupils are doing well in a range of year groups and subject areas, but leaders know that the proportion achieving the highest level in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 has not improved as quickly over time as it has in reading and writing. This has been a key priority for the school this year. In mathematics, pupils are now receiving additional 'spicy' challenges to ensure that they do as well as possible. Performance information from the school indicates that this is having a positive impact on raising expectations and standards.
- The above-average proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register are given highly effective provision and support to ensure that their progress is as rapid as that of other pupils. A 'thrive' room is used effectively for pupils with social and emotional needs and those at risk of exclusion to prepare them for re-integration into lessons.
- Pupils enjoy excellent facilities to ensure that they have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, including languages, humanities and technology. This includes specialist rooms and equipment, for example in music and science, and access to the outdoor facilities, including a wood to learn about minibeasts in science. Nutrition is taught as a discrete subject in order to tackle obesity. The wider curriculum is enhanced through additional clubs, trips and activities. There is a high take-up, which is closely monitored to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are engaged as well.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sports funding contributes towards a PE coordinator working across several schools in the locality. Pupils benefit from inter-school tournaments and high-quality sports equipment. Take-up of sport is high and the incidence of obesity is low.
- Transition arrangements from the first schools to Year 5 and from Year 7 to the high school are highly effective and welcomed by parents and carers. Leaders work closely with partner schools to ensure accuracy of assessment information as pupils move from one phase to another.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, made free-text comments on Parent View, or spoke to inspectors at the school gate expressed positive views about the school since the headteacher took on her role. A large majority thought that the school was well managed and they would recommend the school to another parent.

- British values are promoted very well alongside the school's own values and are highly visible around the school. These prepare pupils very well for life in a modern, culturally diverse society such as Britain.
- The local authority has provided support and challenge to the school. It has contributed funding to the school's programme of staff development. The school is an active partner of a local authority mathematics network.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the strengths and areas for development very well. They have a very accurate view of the school as a result of the increasing transparency of information provided by the headteacher and senior leaders. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions.
 - They know where pupils are doing very well and where further improvements are needed, and know about the quality of teaching. They are fully involved in visits to lessons and have a rigorous system of performance management in place.
 - They know how additional funding has been spent and how its use has been modified.
 - They are well trained and make sure that the school fulfils its statutory safeguarding duties.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Designated leaders are tireless in making sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, where pupils as well as staff look out for each other's welfare and safety. Staff are well trained, including in the 'Prevent' duty, to make sure that they fulfil requirements. Checks are very thorough and go above and beyond what is required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Leaders have successfully ensured that previous weak teaching has been removed and that teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection. The large majority of teachers plan work that is suitably challenging for different groups of learners, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. This is especially the case in mathematics, where pupils can choose tasks ranging from 'mild' to 'very spicy'.
- Teachers know their pupils well and encourage them to challenge themselves further so that they take on more demanding tasks, especially the most able pupils. In Year 5 in mathematics, the most able pupils organised their learning, checked their own answers and even challenged the teacher when some of the teacher's answers appeared to be wrong.
- Expectations of behaviour and conduct are usually very high so that pupils are ready to learn. A strong work ethic is established in most classes, which promotes pupils' enthusiasm and engagement for activities, especially in mathematics.
- Most additional adults ensure that pupils are on task and do not fall behind. Support for pupils who have special educational needs is highly effective and staff are very skilled at motivating pupils and tailoring work accordingly.
- Pupils are encouraged to use their own initiative to develop their thinking skills. In Year 5 in science, the outdoor environment was used effectively for pupils to identify and classify minibeasts. There is a good balance in science between practical activities and written work.
- Teachers use questioning as an effective measure to elicit highly articulate answers from pupils. The range of questioning ensures both stretch and challenge for some and develops the confidence of others to participate.
- Pupils understand the new 'milestones' system of assessment and are able to explain how well they are doing. Teachers encourage pupils to use self- and peer-assessment to enhance their understanding.
- Homework set is appropriately challenging. This was confirmed by pupils and parents.
- The teaching of phonics in key stage 2 is effective and ensures that pupils are ready for Year 7.
- Pupils' books show that teachers' use of the school's new milestone assessment system is inconsistent. The targets set are sometimes too broad and over too long a period to be relevant.
- In a small number of instances, activities lack challenge or are uninspiring. As a result, a few pupils lose interest. Teachers and other adults do not respond quickly enough when this happens and this slows learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's values are highly visible around the school and are embraced by the whole school community. Most pupils demonstrate these values in their learning and in their relationships with each other. One value is independence and leaders ensure that all pupils, regardless of their needs, are given opportunities to practise this to reduce over-reliance on adult support.
- Pupils listen to each other's views and are able to consider both sides of the argument, for example in a Year 7 science debate on climate change.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are involved in the running of the school through a school and sports council. There are peer mediators, school ambassadors and an anti-bullying group run by pupils. Pupils have numerous opportunities to study other faiths and cultures.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of risky situations and how to stay safe, for example through work on e-safety. Staff ensure that pupils are kept safe. During the inspection, inspectors saw examples of pupils watching out for the well-being of others, both in lessons and in the playground.
- The large majority of parents spoken to, or who responded to parental surveys, said that their children were happy in school and felt safe.
- A system of 'restorative justice' ensures that any perpetrators of bullying face up to the consequences of their actions with their victims. A minority of parents perceived that bullying was not dealt with effectively and that perpetrators 'get away with it'. Inspectors did not see evidence of this. Pupils spoken to said that while incidents of bullying are few, when they do occur, for example homophobic name-calling, they are dealt with firmly by leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well around the school. They are courteous and polite to visitors and to each other. Their behaviour on the playground is positive as they engage in a range of sporting and social activities.
- In lessons, the large majority of pupils show interest and enthusiasm. They cooperate fully with teachers and incidents of low-level disruption are rare. In a minority of lessons, some pupils become disengaged and lose interest because they are not inspired by the activities they are given to do.
- The large majority of pupils enjoy their learning and take great care in how they present their written work.
- Attendance is improving and compares very favourably with the national average. The level of persistent absence has increased slightly. The school has identified that this is as a result of a small number of harder-to-reach families. However, overall, persistent absence remains below average.
- According to parents spoken to or surveyed, a large majority thought that pupils were well behaved.
- The standard of presentation of work in pupils' books in Year 6 is not as consistently high as that in other year groups. A small proportion of pupils, including some who are most-able, do not take sufficient pride in their writing.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The progress pupils make by the time they leave at the end of Year 7 has continued to rise over the last three years as expectations have been raised. Pupils make very strong progress in Year 7, which leaves them well prepared for the transition to high school in Year 8. In Years 5 and 6, the school has moved to a new assessment system without national benchmarks, but work in books indicates that pupils are making at least good progress and in some instances, especially in mathematics, it is outstanding.
- Pupils are making sustained progress in their learning as a result of the well-planned activities they are set. Pupils are able to develop their reading skills effectively in Year 5 as a result of purposeful activities that enable them to continue with their learning activities when they are working on their own.
- There has been a three-year improving trend in the progress disadvantaged pupils make. This has led to

a narrowing in the attainment gap with all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. There has been a narrowing in the gap for pupils achieving the highest possible levels in these subjects as well.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the same degree of challenge as other pupils in the school. Consequently, they are making good progress. The school has seen an improvement in their outcomes since the shift towards providing additional support in the classroom so that pupils could access high-quality teaching in the classroom.
- In the most recent tests and assessments, the proportion of most-able pupils who made more than expected progress and gained the highest possible levels of attainment in reading and writing was very high at the end of Year 6. In mathematics, it was not as high as pupils nationally. Over time, the proportions gaining the highest levels of attainment in mathematics have not risen as fast as in reading and writing. Consequently, this was a key priority for the school this academic year. Work in books indicates that most-able pupils are now making very rapid progress in mathematics.
- Most parents spoken to or who responded to parental surveys said that their children were making good progress. However, a significant minority felt that they did not receive valuable information about their child's progress, especially in Years 5 and 6 as the new assessment system without levels was unfamiliar to them.
- Work in pupils' books indicates that some pupils in Year 6 are not making as much rapid progress over time as their peers in writing, where on a few occasions pupils are not given opportunities to practise more advanced skills.

School details

Unique reference number	116779
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10002452

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Humber
Headteacher	Cath Crossley
Telephone number	01905 773362
Website	www.witton.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@witton.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 October 2013

Information about this school

- Witton is much larger than the average-sized primary school and is over-subscribed in Year 5.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is about one in six, which is slightly above the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school mid-way through a key stage is well below the national average.
- The headteacher had just been appointed at the time of the last inspection. The chair of the governing body was in post at that time. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection.
- Based on its 2015 results, the school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards expected for pupils' learning and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons or parts of lessons, of which 11 were jointly observed with the headteacher or other senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities, for example to look at pupils' books or observe additional support provided for pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, other members of staff and a group of pupils. They also held meetings with six members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. The chair of the governing body was unavailable to meet during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke by telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 67 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 44 Parent View free-text responses. They also spoke to 20 parents at the school gate and took account of two recent school parental surveys, the most recent of which was in February 2016, to which there were 123 responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's own self-evaluation, improvement plan and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress. They also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures including those for special educational needs, pupil premium, sports premium, Year 7 catch-up funding, safeguarding, child protection and behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed the minutes of recent governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Peter Box

Wayne Simner

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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